

apuntes

Reflexiones teológicas desde el contexto Hispano-Latino

**Sacramental Spirituality: A Reflection on Wesleyan
and Brazilian Methodist Eucharist Context**

Tércio Bretanha Junker, PhD

PROCESSED

FEB 07 2014

GTU LIBRARY

*Year 33, No 4
Winter 2013*

*Año 33 No 4
Invierno 2013*

Apuntes

Theological Reflections from a Hispanic-Latino Context

Publisher

Jeannie Treviño-Teddle
*Director, Mexican American
Program, Perkins School of
Theology*

Editor

Hugo Magallanes
*Associate Professor
Perkins School of Theology*

Book Review Editor

Edwin Aponte
*Research Professor
New York Theological
Seminary*

Editorial Board

Justo L. González
Editor Emeritus

Luis G. Pedraja
Editor Emeritus

Roberto L. Gómez
Editorial Board Chair

Minerva Carcaño
*Bishop
Desert Southwest Conference*

Mary Catherine Dean
*The United Methodist
Publishing House*

Nora Lozano Diaz
*Professor
Baptist University of the
Americas*

Saul Espino
*United Methodist Church
General Board of Higher
Education and Ministry*

Joaquin Garcia
*Director HispanicLatino
Academy, Tennessee
Conference*

Carmen Gaud
*International Editor
The Upper Room*

Rebeca Radillo
*Associate Professor
New York Theological
Seminary*

Saul Trinidad
*National Plan for Hispanic
Ministry of the United
Methodist Church*

Apuntes (ISSN # 0279-9790) is published quarterly by the Mexican American Program, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX 75275. Periodical postage paid at Dallas, TX 75260 and additional mailing offices. **Subscription** is \$15 per year and \$25 for two years.

Direct inquiries about subscriptions to the Mexican American Program, Perkins School of Theology, or call (214) 768-2265.

POSTMASTER, send address changes to: **Apuntes**, Mexican American Program, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX 75275.

Manuscripts are to be sent to the editor, Dr. Hugo Magallanes, as email attachments to hugo@smu.edu. **Materials sent in Microsoft Word Documents are appreciated.** E-mail editorial inquiries or comments to apuntes@smu.edu.

Mailing and printing of **Apuntes** are provided by the United Methodist Publishing House.

From the Editor

The terms Hispanic and Latino/a have been the topic of many discussions and conversations both in the academy and in the church, and in these discussions one of the main points is who is included and who is excluded in using this terms; and for this reason many prefer the term Latina/o since this terms includes an important group—our sisters and brothers from Brazil and those of Brazilian heritage. In this number of *Apuntes*, we will have the privilege to read an article from this perspective, written by Dr. Tércio Bretanha Junker, Assistant Professor of Worship and Director of Sweeney Chapel at Christian Theological Seminary (CTS), Indianapolis, Indiana. Dr. Junker is also an ordained elder of the Brazilian Methodist Church, choir conductor, composer, author, and liturgical scholar. After graduating from the Methodist School of Theology of the Methodist University of São Paulo (UMESP) with a B.A. in Theology in 1985, Dr. Junker went to Buenos Aires, Argentina where he completed his graduate studies in Theology at ISEDET (Evangelical Institute of Theological Higher Education), then earned his Master of Theological Studies from CTS in 1999 and his Ph.D. in Liturgical Studies from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in 2003. Dr. Junker's musical and liturgical contributions includes conducting several choir ensembles on recordings, composing church music songs, and teaching liturgy and/or music in four different institutions: Methodist School of the Theology of UMESP, ISEDET, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, and CTS. His choir compositions and arrangements have been recorded and performed by several groups in Brazil and abroad. Dr. Junker's songs have been published in several languages, including Portuguese, Spanish, English, German, French, Korean, Japanese, and Norwegian. In the field of liturgy, Dr. Junker has published articles, chapters, and book sections. His book *Prophetic Liturgy: Towards a Transforming Christian Praxis* will be published by Wipf and Stock Publishers, upcoming spring 2014.

I am grateful for Dr. Junker's contribution and I believe that his perspective and his views regarding sacramental spirituality are essential in understanding our diversity as well as our collective identity, as we read this article and as we worship, may God helps us to understand our prophetic identity.

Sacramental Spirituality: A Reflection on Wesleyan and Brazilian Methodist Eucharist Context

Tércio Bretanha Junker, PhD

Introduction

This text intends to reflect upon the Brazilian Methodist sacramental understanding and practice in light of Wesley's sacramental Theology. It is meant to invite the Brazilian Methodist people, in particular, and other missionary contexts abroad, in general, to understand and to live the magnitude of the sacramental life of the Church, especially through the Eucharistic celebration. It is also meant to emphasize the meaning and relevance of the development of a Christian liturgical life engaged in the world in a prophetic sense.

Before beginning such endeavor, some preliminary comments need to be addressed. First, Sacramental theology is a subject about which, for decades past, controversies have been raised in different theological contexts and denominational practices around the world. For example, the rites of Christian initiation have been strongly affected by these controversies in Christian historical trajectory. A careful historical analysis on themes such as infant baptism, rebaptism, incorporation in the Body of Christ, catechesis, believer's baptism, and confirmation could easily manifest these controversies mentioned above. The same argument could be used regarding the Eucharist. Themes such as worthy participation in the Holy Communion, infant participation, open Table, real presence, etc. present another field for controversies. Because of these controversies, from past to present times, local Protestant congregations in Brazil have been influenced by different theological concepts and liturgical practices.

Second, some efforts and attempts have been made among a restrict group of theologians, clergy, and laity in the Brazilian Methodist context to address the controversies mentioned above. For this group, in which I include myself, the theological, biblical, historical, and pastoral fields are essential resources in a responsible discussion about Christian sacramental theology. For us, in principle, Methodist identity relates directly to the sacramental life and to the Wesleyan sacramental theology, in particular, and to the "common Christian tradition,"¹ in general. These concepts are pillars in which faith and Christian life are built up.

There is, however, an inclination within the Brazilian Methodist context—which I believe is also present in various other Brazilian Protestant denominations and missionary contexts around the world—to dismiss and overlook the importance of discussions and

¹ By "common Christian tradition" I mean what was and still is essential in Christian liturgical practices and thoughts throughout the Christian historic trajectory. This expression is used here not only in relation to what exist in common in denominational sense, but also understood in relation to what exist in the most historically Christian liturgical practice. The insane Brazilian Protestant tendency today—to mention the context I know the most—is to refuse important liturgical acts just because they seem like Roman Catholic

practices involving a sound sacramental understanding. To put it plainly, some lay leaders and pastors seem to ignore the implications of carrying certain celebrations with limited sacramental sensitivity and narrow historical-theological foundation. This growing group of leaders seems to conceive symbols, rites, traditions, among other liturgical concepts, as belonging to the past and as a matter of taste that can easily be discarded upon one's discretion. This is precisely what I intend to address in the present reflection. Here are some questions that permeate the core of this essay: how can the theological scholarship regarding the sacraments, such as Wesley's sacramental theology writings and practice, invite the church to reflect and re-envision its own sacramental practices? Why the current practice of the Brazilian Methodist liturgical services present distance from the Wesleyan sacramental theology? How the Brazilian Methodist communities, where its sacramental life is strongly rooted in the "common Christian tradition," in general, and in the Wesleyan sacramental theology, in particular, could become more aware of its Methodist identity and legacy? How the spiritual formation of the Brazilian Methodist community could wisely direct its content to the deep theological meaning of the sacraments? Finally, in which way does the worship celebration expressively reflect the rich and dynamic forms of liturgical sacramental action?

Addressing questions such as these is by no means a simple task with absolute answers and predetermined possibilities. Nonetheless, the complex character of such an endeavor should not discourage us from attempting to envision new alternatives for a "sacramental sensitivity" of the church. In the following sections of this essay, I offer my own perspective on the subject by looking more closely at the Brazilian Methodist church context, surveying how its historical and recent contemporary contexts shaped its liturgical identity. In order to do so, I engage our conversation in four sections with the following perspectives in mind. First, it is indispensable to call upon our Wesleyan roots and to answer the following question: what is foundational in Wesley's sacramental theology as it is portrayed in historical Wesleyan related documents? Second, it is necessary to describe the historical reasons that generate the particular Brazilian Methodist Eucharistic understanding and practice.

Third, in order to help further theological reflection, I offer a personal theological approach in which I address the notion of sacramental spirituality by exploring the meaning of the concept of symbol and by presenting a theological analysis of a song that I wrote for the Eucharistic celebration. Finally, following the richness of the Eucharistic liturgical structure, experienced by most Methodist churches around the world these days, I offer an appendix with a complete Eucharistic liturgy, in Portuguese language, I compiled and adapted as an example for the Methodist Portuguese speaking people, wherever they are. It is my intention that this essay may find resonance to a broader Methodist audience than just

¹(cont.) cultic practices. Unfortunately the value of the Christian historic trajectory of these practices is placed aside by many Protestant celebrations. How can people understand the tremendous symbolic value of liturgical treasures that cross years and years? How can these symbolic treasures reach further generations without keeping them alive in our regular celebrations? We must look in as many different directions as possible.

the Brazilian or Portuguese-speaking people. There several aspects of the historical missionary enterprise and of the sacramental Methodist identity that may find relevance to a broader Methodist communities seeking to sound sacramental identity and practice.

Wesleyan Roots

Four main Wesleyan sources, which reveal Wesley's Eucharistic understandings², will be briefly considered. They are: John Wesley's service book called "Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America;" the sermon "The Duty of Constant Communion;" the sermon on "The Means of Grace;" and the collection of "Hymns on the Lord's Supper;" The idea is not to develop an exhaustive analysis of these primary sources but, rather, to provide some foundational elements that reveal Wesley's value, respect and appreciation on this relevant matter in the life of the Church.

John Wesley's service book called "Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America" was not intended to disregard the Church of England's Book of Common Prayer (BCP) at all. His appreciation on the BCP was expressed in the Sunday Service's preface, which manifests his personal conviction. Wesley said:

I believe there is no LITURGY in the world, either in ancient or modern language, which breathes more of a solid, scriptural, rational Piety, than the Common Prayer of the Church of England. And though the main of it was compiled considerably more than two hundred years ago, yet is the language of it, not only pure, but strong and elegant in the highest degree.³

James White suggests that Wesley's "Sunday Service is an up-to-date version of the familiar 1662 BCP."⁴ He also says: "Wesley's treatment of the Lord's Supper is deeply conservative; no really essential matters are altered in it. ... Minor adaptations to the American situation occur, but basically the 1662 rite remains intact."⁵ For Ole E. Borgen, the reasons that inspired Wesley to revise some parts of the Liturgy and the Articles of Religion were theological: lack of clarity, and anachronism. He says: "Some of the changes and omissions definitely are of theological nature, but many are necessitated by ambiguity

² According to Borgen, it appears to be necessary and useful to give a brief survey of some of the main sources for Wesley's sacramental theology. Besides those selected for this essay, it would be appropriate, for an extended study on eucharist, to add the following representative Wesleyan primary sources: *The Journal*, the *Letters*, the *Notes upon the Old Testament* and *Notes upon the New Testament*, *A Roman Catechism*..., and the *Twenty-four Articles*. These sources have considerable material relevant to eucharist study. See Ole E. Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments: A Theological Study* (reprinted by Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000), 20-36.

³ John Wesley's preface to "The Sunday Service," delivered in September 9, 1784. *John Wesley's Sunday Service for the Methodists in North America with an Introduction by James F. White*, following page 37 before A2. See also Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments*, 50.

⁴ White, *John Wesley's Sunday Service*, 16.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 26

and lack of clarity; other parts are irrelevant because of the difference in time, place and circumstances.”⁶ Wesley recognized the emergent necessity of the Methodist people in America in terms of theological, doctrinal, liturgical, and institutional support. Wesley’s plan was sent to the ordained Methodists in America in 1784. According to Richard P. Heitzenrater, “the new organization would have all the essential ecclesiological features of a ‘church’ denomination: an ordained clergy to administer the sacraments, an official service book containing the liturgy, and doctrinal standards in the form of Articles of Religion.”⁷ This fact reflects Wesley’s deep concern to the establishment of the identity of the incipient movement in America.

On September 10, 1784 Wesley wrote a letter entitled “To Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our Brethren in North-America”. In six numbered paragraphs, Wesley explained his thoughts about the acts he had made in which he proclaimed the American Methodists’ emancipation. In the fourth paragraph, he affirmed:

I have prepared a liturgy little differing from that of the church of England (I think, the best constituted national church in the world) which I advise all the travelling-preachers to use, on the Lord’s day, in all their congregations, reading the litany only on Wednesdays and Fridays, and praying extempore on all other days. I also advise the elders to administer the Supper of the Lord on every Lord’s day.⁸

Therefore, Wesley offered the basic documents he judged necessary to constitute a church. In that sense the Sunday Service played an important role to the nascent American Methodist Church. White said: “The *Sunday Service*, then, is basically the work of one who loved the BCP and was determined to preserve it for others by adapting it to their changed circumstances.”⁹ Wesley’s treatment on Eucharistic liturgy—*The Order for the Administration of the LORD’S SUPPER*, —as part of his *Sunday Service*, reflects his intentional will to maintain the traditional way to celebrate the Eucharist. It also provides Wesley’s own theological and strong practical conception in terms of the Eucharist being celebrated constantly and intensively. Based on his strong determination of having constant communion, Wesley had sufficient motivation to ordain ministers in America and send them the Sunday Service Liturgy. At that time, most of the American parishes had no communion weekly. Wesley did not agree with receiving communion just two or three times per year. The Church of England required communion three times a year (Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost), but Wesley encouraged a much more frequent celebration, taking the sacrament an average of every three to five days himself. White adds about Wesley’s

⁶ Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments*, 35.

⁷ Richard P. Heitzenrater. *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 288.

⁸ White, *John Wesley’s Sunday Service*, (ii). See also Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments*, 35 note 80.

⁹ White, *John Wesley’s Sunday Service*, 11

position by saying: "He himself was not content with only a weekly Eucharist but communed, more often than not, twice a week."¹⁰ Unfortunately, Wesley's conservative adaptation of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer did not last for long among his fellows in North America.

Wesley's determination to have constant communion (weekly eucharist) is clear and well emphasized on his sermon "The Duty of Constant Communion." This sermon presents his theological and pastoral conceptions in defense of the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord's Supper as often as he/she can. Amongst the reasons presented by Wesley for this position are (1) Christ's command "Do this"; (2) it is an act of forgiveness of our sins; (3) it is part of our Christian tradition, "like the first Christians"; and (4) it is a continual remembrance of the death of Christ, "In remembrance of me". This sermon represents Wesley's attempt to reverse the trend and restore the Eucharist to its primary place in Christian Faith affirming that the Eucharist is a key point toward the renewal of the Church. Wesley was very consistent in his position of frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper. The clear evidence of this fact is that this sermon was reprinted above fifty-five years later from its first publication¹¹ as Wesley attests it in the note added at the beginning of the sermon, which reads: "The following Discourse was written above five-and-fifty years ago, for the use of my pupils at Oxford. I have added very little, but retrenched much; as I then used more words than I do now. But, I thank God, I have not yet seen cause to alter my sentiments in any point which is therein delivered."¹² About this William Crockett says: "This is a clear indication that Wesley's thought and practice concerning the Eucharist were consistent throughout his life."¹³ Regarding Wesley's emphasis on constant communion, Bard Thompson says: "... in keeping with Wesley's recommendation that Communion ought to be celebrated every Lord's Day, and ought to be received as often as one had the opportunity."¹⁴ Frequent communion is the source for spiritual renewal and foundation for Christian identity. Wesley was aware of that simple reality.

As it is clear in this sermon, Wesley refutes any practice other than our constant receiving of the sacrament. Even more convincing of Wesley's idea that the Lord's Supper was central to "true religion" was his own practice of it.

It is indispensable at this point to take some insights from Wesley's sermon "The Means of Grace." If by any chance we seek a spiritual life as a dynamic and progressive journey involving God's gracious initiatives toward us and our faithful and continued

¹⁰ White, *John Wesley's Sunday Service*, p. 17.

¹¹ Borgen attests that the "discourse proper is dated 'Feb. 19. 1731/2' and the Outline 'Feb. 21. 1731/2.' He also suggests that this sermon is "not basically Wesley's own." It has quotes from Robert Nelson's *The Great Duty of Frequenting the Christian Sacrifice* (1706), and from William Beveridge's *The Great Necessity and Advantage of Frequent Communion* (1710). Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments*, 23. See also Maddox's note 56 of chapter 8, Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 349.

¹² *Ibid.*, 23.

¹³ William Crockett, *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation* (New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1989), 200.

¹⁴ Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 412.

response to God's gracious acts, then we can infer that God has delivered uncountable means through which God's grace can come to us. Wesley defines "means of grace" as "outward signs, words, or actions ordained of God, and appointed for this end – to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace."¹⁵ Among these ordinary channels Wesley emphasizes three. They are: (1) prayer; (2) Scripture; and (3) the Lord's Supper. He says:

The chief of these means are prayer, whether in secret or with the great congregation; searching the Scriptures (which implies reading, hearing, and meditating thereon); and receiving the Lord's Supper, eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Him: And these we believe to be ordained of God, as the ordinary channels of conveying his grace to the souls of men.¹⁶

At this point, a general statement is in order. Wesley did not believe the means of grace had any power in themselves. They are not ends in themselves. The use of them does not guarantee growth in grace. However, Wesley did believe that these ordinary channels were used by God to communicate God's grace to people. That is why Wesley also believed the Eucharist, as means of grace, has the potential to convert people. With regard the Eucharist as means of conversion, Wesley has the following to say:

There is a kind of order, wherein God himself is generally pleased to use these means in bringing a sinner to salvation. A stupid, senseless wretch is going on in his own way, not having God in all his thoughts, when God comes upon him unawares, perhaps by an awakening sermon or conversation, perhaps by some awful providence, or, it may be, an immediate stroke of his convincing Spirit, without any outward means at all. ... But here he observes others go up to the table of the Lord. He considers, "Christ has said, 'Do this!' How is it that I do not? I am too great a sinner. I am not fit. I am not worthy." After struggling with these scruples a while, he breaks through. And thus he continues in God's way, in hearing, reading, meditating, praying, and partaking of the Lord's Supper, till God, in the manner that pleases him, speaks to his heart, "Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace."¹⁷

In Wesley understanding, God ordinarily delivers grace and promises through God's ordinances: the means of grace. Borgen asserts: "For every man who seeks the salvation of his soul, a constant attendance upon the means of grace is both a necessity and a duty."¹⁸ Quoting from the *Journal*, Borgen emphasizes Wesley's strong position on that matter. It says:

What is to be inferred from this undeniable matter of fact – one that had not faith received it in the Lord's Supper? Why: (1) that there are means

¹⁵ Albert C. Outler (Ed.) *The Works of John Wesley*, VI. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 381.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., XXX

¹⁸ Ibid., 97-98.

of grace – that is, outward ordinances – whereby the inward grace of God is ordinarily conveyed to man, whereby the faith that brings salvation is conveyed to them who before had it not; (2) that one of these means is the Lord's Supper; and (3) that he who has not this faith ought to wait for it in the use of both this and of the other means which God hath ordained.¹⁹

In the early Methodist movement, the Lord's Table became a high worship point. From Wesley's sermon *The Means of Grace* we can affirm that a Wesleyan Eucharistic invitation should be an open one,²⁰ extended to those who truly and earnestly repented of sin, is in love and charity with neighbor, and intended to lead a new life following the commandments of God. As a means of grace, the Eucharist is that banquet by which God confers mercy and forgiveness, strengthens our faith, and calls us to be agents of justice and love in the entire world.

The next section on *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* is not intended to be an analytical one. Rather, in this essay, it is design to illustrate its value and relevance in the incipient Methodist movement, and to describe the tremendous influence it imparted in the sacramental awareness of Wesley's followers. As Teresa Berger describes, *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* was not the only collection of hymns compiled by the Wesleys. She says:

It must not be overlooked that Wesley dedicated volumes of hymns to other themes as well: the Eucharist (*Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, 1745), the Trinity (*Hymns to the Trinity*, 1746), the Holy Scriptures (*Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures*, 1762), Christmas (*Hymns for the Nativity of Our Lord*, 1745), Easter (*Hymns for the Lord's Resurrection*, 1746) and other occasions of the church year.²¹

Hymns on the Lord's Supper, published in 1745 by John and Charles Wesley contains 166 original hymns written concerning the same subject, the Eucharist. It was the firm belief of the two brothers that the Eucharist was a key in the renewal of the Church. This can be assured not only by the extensive number of hymns related to the Eucharist or by the fact that they provided specific collection of these hymns compiling them into the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*. There is no doubt that the Eucharistic theology present in this rich treasure gave definitive spiritual foundations and Christian identity to the early Methodism celebration joyful life. As Maddox says, "This introduction of hymns into the communion service was a novelty, which surely enhanced the dimension of joy in the celebration."²² It

¹⁹ Ibid., 97-98.

²⁰ It is important to affirm that Wesley's predilection for order would have insisted on baptism before Communion as the common Christian tradition. It is our Methodist practice to state that unbaptized persons who receive Communion should be counseled and nurtured toward baptism as soon as possible.

²¹ Teresa Berger, *Theology in Hymns? A Study of the Relationship of Doxology and Theology According to a Collection of hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists (1780)* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 67.

²² Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 203.

represents the root of Wesleyan sacramental theology intended to accompany and supplement the Anglican liturgy.

Considering the date of this book and the use of it throughout Wesley's lifetime, it is possible to affirm that its doctrines were consistently emphasized also in his teachings. According to Borgen, *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* was "re-published no less than nine times during Wesley's lifetime."²³

It must be recognized that Wesleys' doctrine on Eucharist, articulated in this particular hymn-book, follows closely *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice* written by Daniel Brevint, first published in 1673. The relevance of Brevint's text on Wesley's account was manifested by the fact that Wesley condensed Brevint's text and included it as the preface to *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*. Nevertheless, no objections can be made to the fact that these hymns expressed Wesley's own teaching on early Methodist Eucharistic doctrine.

The hymn-book was arranged as follows:

1. Preface – The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice: Extracted from Dr. Brevint.
2. As it is a Memorial of the Sufferings and Death of Christ.
3. As it is a Sign and a Means of Grace.
4. The Sacrament as a Pledge of Heaven.
5. The Holy Eucharist as it implies a Sacrifice.
6. Concerning the Sacrifice of our Persons.
7. After the Sacrament.

This volume is a remarkable example of Wesleyan poetical works that shows how worship informs theology and how theology in turn shapes the identity of the movement, through its practice and understanding of the Eucharist. It represents the spirit of the revival movement that took place in the eighteenth century context. In this regard Rattenbury, makes the following remark:

The hymn book was a product of two outstanding facts of the Revival: its experimental religion, and the orderliness of the Wesleyan-Anglican tradition. And both were necessary for that permanent work of God of which the Wesleys were instruments. It should never be forgotten that these hymns were Revival hymns, and that Sacramental worship was not only not contrary to Evangelical, but in the eighteenth century, in its intensified form, one of its chief results.²⁴

Rattenbury also says: "The antithesis is seen to be ridiculous when one remembers the fervent freedom of Charles Wesley's evangelism at the very time he was writing these hymns and practicing and insisting so strongly on sacramental observance."²⁵ He also affirms, "The evangelical experience of the Methodist gives color and life and distinctiveness to many of these verses."²⁶ In Wesleyan perspective, there was no

²³ Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments*, 26. See also J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (Akron: OSL Publications, 1996), 7

²⁴ Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns*, 12.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 8.

distinction between the formality of the sacrament and the freedom of evangelistic worship. "Sacramental" and "Evangelical" were not in opposition to each other, as an antithesis between the terms. Rather, they contribute to the character and strengthen of the movement.

The next section pays attention to the incipient attempt to establish the Methodist Church in Brazil, considering especially its liturgical context and practice.

The Brazilian Methodist Historical Missionary Context

The Brazilian Methodist Church was established under the North American Methodist missionary enterprise during the early 19th century. The missionaries were not able to deal liturgically with the incipient process of the Protestantism in Brazil. The public Sunday worship was free in its structure, and the leader was invited to adapt it according to the necessities of the moment, such as the emphasis on singing hymns translated into Portuguese, extemporaneous prayers, and evangelistic preaching. Thus, the sacramental life of the community remained aside. The inevitable inheritance is what Simei Monteiro well describes as follows:

The preaching, message, or sermon is still the part that is most emphasized, thereby retaining its mystique. The theology and practice of the sacraments as means of grace was and still is obscured by the elevation of the proclamation of the Word, an emphasis which, historically, was enforced by the shortage of ordained pastors and the consequent non-sacramental lay leadership.²⁷

The Sacramental life of the Church, particularly the Eucharist, was not the main practice in the establishment of Methodist identity in Brazilian lands.

During the missionary enterprise, the centrality of the proclamation of the Word hid the sacramental conception of the worship. The Word could be preached every Sunday, or yet every day, but the "constant communion" as John Wesley suggests was not a rule, it was rather an exception. The regular Sunday Service did not imply celebrating the Holy Communion, but it did mean hearing the preacher's message. The reason for this liturgical posture is mainly contextual, as it has been described up to this point, but it does not excuse the lack of theological or pastoral material or any other effort in direction to the establishment of a sacramental identity.

The missionary ministry had the following characteristics: (a) an ample distribution of the Bible; (b) emphasis on conversion; (c) Bible studies in small groups, meeting in houses, and (d) education. The missionaries did not come to provide liturgical identity to an established group of Protestant colonies. The missionaries came mainly to convert people, to start new congregations, and to launch new schools.

²⁷ Simei Ferreira de Barros Monteiro, "Singing a New Song: Developing Methodist Worship in Latin America" in: Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (Ed.) *The Sunday Service of the Methodists: Twentieth-Century Worship in Worldwide Methodism: studies in honor of James F. White* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 268.

As it was described by Simeí Monteiro “in worship, people sang, the Bible was read and explained, there was prayer, an offering was collected, visitors were welcomed, and the works of the church were promoted.”²⁸ This free service characterized the missionary era. The missionaries, with a few exceptions as we will see below, were not concerned with the use of Worship Books and elaborated liturgies. The reason for that is quite simple: illiteracy among the community, anti-Catholic posture, the emphasis on conversion, and the lack of institutional uniformity. Now the situation is slightly different, but this style of worship is still performed in many Methodist Churches in Brazil.

The first attempt to organize Methodism in Latin America started in 1835 when the Mission Board of the Methodist Church in the United States sent Rev. Fountain E. Pitts to visit Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Montevideo (Uruguay), and Buenos Aires (Argentina). Some of these visits resulted in the formation of small groups of Methodists.

In 1836, after Rev. Pitts had returned to the United States, Rev. Justin Spaulding arrived in Rio de Janeiro. In answer to Rev. Spaulding’s calls for help, Rev. Daniel Parish Kidder arrived in Brazil in the year of 1837. In 1841 ends the first attempt to organize the Methodism in Brazil. There is no bibliographical reference about the use of any Book of Service and about the Eucharistic practice at this time. This fact attests that the liturgical tradition was not a main point during this first missionary effort. In addition, there were no evidences describing efforts in translating any Service Book, even part of it, to Portuguese. This evidence emphasizes that the liturgical documents were not considered as important elements in the formation of Methodist identity.

Rev. John James Ransom, who arrived in Rio de Janeiro in 1876, restarted the Methodist mission after 35 years of Methodist missionary absence in Brazilian lands. This second attempt to organize the Methodist Church in Brazil presents evidence of liturgical sensitivity. Ransom’s great contribution was his translation of parts of the Book of Common Prayer (BCP). He called this work *Compêndio da Igreja Metodista Episcopal* (Compendium of the Episcopal Methodist Church). In the preface of his Compendium, he declares, “this is almost a simple revision of the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) of the Anglican Church.”²⁹ Also in its preface, Ransom declares that this is an adaptation and revision, for Brazil, of the morning and evening prayers of the Book of Common Prayer according to John Wesley’s last adaptation and revision.³⁰ The historian Duncan Alexander Reily, a North American Methodist missionary, who arrived in Brazil in 1948 and lived

²⁸ Simeí Ferreira de Barros Monteiro. “Singing a New Song: Developing Methodist Worship in Latin America,” 267-68.

²⁹ J. J. Ransom. “Compêndio da Igreja Metodista Episcopal” (Rio de Janeiro, Typographia D. M. Hazlett, 1878), 4. Note 103 in: Tércio B. Junker. *Crise de Identidade – Presença Protestante no Brasil e a Busca de Identidade do Protestantismo de Origem Missionária Através da Liturgia* [Manuscript - Master of Theology Thesis] (Buenos Aires, ISEDET, 1993), 69.

³⁰ Carl Joseph Hahn. *História do Culto Protestante no Brasil*. (São Paulo: ASTE, 1989), 244. It is clear here that Ransom is talking about John Wesley’s *Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*, even though he did not explicitly mention it in the preface.

there until his death in 2004, describes Ransom's work as "an opposite tendency of the majority: an old liturgical concern."³¹ Reily's assumption here is that Ransom is the only one, among the American Methodist missionaries at that time, to present liturgical sensitivity. Ransom's Compendium manifests his real interest in the values of the Methodist liturgical roots. This was an authentic effort in order to keep the liturgical identity at the beginning of the Brazilian Methodist Church. One of its purposes was to give reference tools to whom will be "the cornerstone" in the starting process of the Brazilian Protestantism: the lay leader. Here are some of Ransom's words written in the preface of the Compendium, which clearly present his main intention with the document:

Here are some words about this collection of prayers, which is almost a simple revision of The Book of Common Prayer of the Anglican Church. ... We do not want to teach that people have the obligation to use these forms. Beside this collection in English, an authorization of the South Methodist Episcopal Church was published, and the last part of its official preface says: 'The Sunday Worship is reprinted for the use of any congregation that wants to do so, but it is not an obligation as in the case of the Ordination, Sacrament, Wedding, and Funeral forms.' Nevertheless, it seems to us that, in the actual state of the evangelical cause in Brazil, there is a vacuum that this book can fill. In many places a numerous of the Holy Scripture issues have been spread, and there are many people who desire a simple, rational, pure, and pleasant worship to God. There are places where no preacher has visited, and where, however, there are people who wish Sunday worship in an intelligible language. To all those people we give the following proposal: In whatever city, village, hamlet or neighborhood, there are ten people who commit themselves to meet in a convenient place, in the morning, or both morning and evening, on Sundays, let them hold this book, and one of them take the place of a minister, saying in the correct place what he/she must have to say.³²

Ransom compiled the Book in three parts: The Sunday Service; The Ritual; and General Rules and Religious Articles. Ransom's interest in liturgy was clear, but there is no evidence that his book had been used largely among the Brazilian Methodists. Reily helps us to perceive this fact. He says: "The conclusion is that the 'Morning Prayer' and the 'Evening Prayer' never get to be very popular among Brazilian Methodists, making

³¹ Duncan A. Reily, "O Culto no Protestantismo Puritano-Pietista" in: *Estudos de Religião 2: O Culto Protestante no Brasil* (S.B.Campo, Pós-Graduação em Ciências da Religião, Imprensa Metodista, 1985). Note 165 in: Tércio B. Junker, *Crise de Identidade*, 111.

³² J. J. Ransom, "Compendium," 4. Note 169 in: Tércio Junker, *Crise de Identidade*, 114. The translation from Portuguese is mine.

unnecessary a new edition of the Compendium.”³³ This fact brings out a painful reality: the beginning of the American Methodist missionary task, excluding Ransom’s effort, had no commitment to the liturgical tradition, and worse it did not prepare the people to liturgical sensitivity. If the Brazilian Methodist Church, in its beginning, had had other missionaries and leaders with liturgical sensitivity like Ransom’s, its liturgical history could have had a different direction.

In the sequence, following the steps of the Wesley brothers, who wrote several hymns (166) for the Eucharist, and inspired some of the American Methodist missionaries in the past, I want to share the lyrics of a song I composed for the Eucharist, and offer a theological reflection of its content. It is important to recognize that we are living in a different context, but the Wesleyan passion and theological foundation for the Eucharistic celebration should still resonates in our mind, spirit and soul.

A Personal Theological Approach

As I understand it, sacrament is a powerful, transformative mediation that consists of more than mere signs of bread, wine, water and oil. This text tries to establish that these, and many others, are more than signs. They are symbols. They actually embody and put into effect the promises they claim to render. The majority of contemporary Christians, young and old, educated or not, would not be able to adequately explain the meaning of the church’s theological treatise, but all of us, certainly, would be able to spend hours and hours talking about living liturgical experiences, such as, the meaning of the hymns’ doctrinal contents. The hymns have the unsuspected power of communicating deep truths through their words and images, and through their sounds, which open our minds and hearts. However, before we move to the song, it is important to reflect on another medium through which we also express our beliefs—symbols.

When we bring to our mind “a thing,” an object, even a moment that has symbolic meaning for us; something that has a special story or a meaningful narrative, we do enter into a sensitive, sacred, and symbolic world. There are things that when we see, smell, taste, touch, hear, or even imagine, lead us to experience this “sensitive” moment that may make us revisit a memorable spiritual time in our life. When such event happens a sacred moment is engendered—causing us to remember and ponder about returning. From that perspective even a cigarette butt, in Leonardo Boff’s³⁴ approach, or a lilac bush, in Rubem

³³ Duncan A. Reily, “O Culto,” 100. Note 171 in: Tércio Junker, *Crise de Identidade*, 115. Unfortunately, this Compendium is not available to be reached at this moment. I had the privilege to use the original volume (now missing) of the Brazilian Methodist Seminary Library during my graduate theological studies in Buenos Aires – Argentina. It would be helpful for further studies using it as a reference for structural, theological, and pastoral analysis. At this point, it is important to emphasize the fact that the Compendium had a short period of life, and it frustrated the intent of being a means of affirmation of the Methodist identity through liturgy. I didn’t get the opportunity to check it in the library at Drew or Emory Universities. This is something I am planning to do in the near future.

³⁴ Leonardo Boff, *Sacraments of Life*, 15-19.

Alves³⁵ narrative, can reveal sacramental meaning. We all have an object or objects close to us that have special meaning in our lives. We all stand in awe and wonder before the stories and narratives they evoke. I have one of those special objects with symbolic meaning that I preserve close to me. To that narrative, I will turn next.

Here is my story: a sacred one. I have a silver table fork that I preserve with love and care in my home. As an object, we can describe it from at least two different perspectives. First, the product itself, its material, if it has been made out of silver, gold, iron, wood, or plastic, etc.; its cost, how long it takes to be produced, and so on. We can label it with a *market value*. As an object, my table fork is similar to any other in the world except for one thing: it was my beloved mom who gave it to me when I left home many years ago. It was a *gift*. That brings the second perspective into our conversation: its symbolical meaning. For me it is not just a table fork. As a symbolical gift, it speaks so many mute, secret things. It carries my mom's *absent presence* as I see, touch, use, and take care of this special table fork. In that sense, I can say that it has a sacramental meaning. There is means of grace carried by it because I know my mom was always praying to God for her children and all families around the world to have the gift of food on their table. As Leonardo Boff affirms, "The sacramental structure emerges when things begin to speak and human beings begin to hear their voices."³⁶ In other words, in the sacramental realm we need symbols. A thing becomes a symbol when we need to explain its mystery, to share its narrative because it communicates multiple levels of meanings. It has a different meaning, symbolic meaning, which points to a different reality. My table fork brings memory of an absence: my mom is not physically present, and yet, the narratives and memories my table fork evokes make me feel my mom's absent presence.

My table fork is no more a thing. It has become a symbol. It has no market value. Its value transcends the object itself. It has sacramental meaning. It is, in fact, a sacramental gift. As such, the logic that sustains my relationship to it is a transcendental one: the logic of symbolic exchange. Symbols are important in the sacramental realm precisely because they constitute the vehicle, the mediation of grace or "symbolic exchange," by which Christian identity finds its concrete completion. Reassuring Boff's understanding, I would say that the symbolic arises when symbols participate in a ritual action and people who participate in it hear their narratives, understand their meanings, and claim them as their own. A thing becomes a symbol when we appropriate the significance of its mystery. The principle that rules the symbolic exchange is one of abundant graciousness. There are connections, alliances, recognitions, and remembrances. In sum, there is identification between giver and receiver. Theologically, it is possible to say that there is *grace*, which is God's gift. The theological significance of *Gift* is that it functions outside of the order of value. *Gifts* exchanged in the realm of the symbolic have the phenomenological particularity of non-value, and yet they are treasures that enrich our relationship with God, with ourselves, and with others.

³⁵ Rubem Alves, *I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body*, 12-14.

³⁶ Leonardo Boff, *Sacraments of Life; Life of the Sacraments* (Washington, DC: The Pastoral Press, 1987), 2.

Therefore, in the sacramental context, symbols are effective media that legitimate beliefs and behaviors. They are not merely static signs. Symbols effectively participate in sacramental actions. For José Severino Croatto, there is no religious experience without symbol. He says, "Every religious expression is symbolic, and it is not experienced without symbol: a fact that opens roads and guides."³⁷ Symbol is a necessary component of religious language precisely because, as Croatto points out, symbol is polysemic (or "pluri-valent," another term in Croatto's language), relational, permanent, universal, pre-hermeneutic, and totalizing.³⁸

This section will help direct the theological analysis to the subject of the prophetic dimension of the sacramental practice of the worshipping community, in which the feast of Jesus' Table is intensely celebrated as sacramental gift. As a personal theological exercise, it would be helpful to concentrate efforts on a theological reflection concerning sacramental gift: Jesus' Table. These theological considerations are meant to be a starting point for further analysis on sacramental theology among Brazilian Methodist members.

Therefore, let us look at the following song called "Come to the Table," which I wrote for the Eucharistic Service.³⁹ The theological content developed in this text will go beyond the words of the hymn text itself. It will be used as a source of inspiration for the theological analysis based on the prophetic dimension of the Eucharist suggested in the whole of this reflection.

1. Come to the table, all people, hand in hand!
Children, men, women now come from every land!
*Let us together all share the bread,
the bread with faith and joy.
Nobody will be excluded
From the Jesus Table ever more.*
2. "Take and eat, this is my body," Jesus said.
"It's giv'n for all that the world may now be fed."
3. Drink the cup with new thanksgiving, all of you,
for the forgiveness was giv'n, to make us new.

³⁷ Severino Croatto, *Los Lenguajes de la Experiencia Religiosa: Estudio de Fenomenología de la Religión* ("The Languages of Religious Experience: Study on Religion Phenomenology") (Buenos Aires: Editorial Docencia, 1994), 16. Also, Luis Maldonado, in his book "El sentido litúrgico" ("The Liturgical Sense"), says "there cannot be experience of God and access to God without symbols." Translation mine. See Luis Maldonado, *El Sentido Litúrgico: Nuevos Paradigmas* (Madrid: PPC, Editorial y Distribuidora, 1999), 130.

³⁸ For a descriptive approach to these concepts see Croatto, *Los Lenguajes de la Experiencia Religiosa*, 75-82.

³⁹ This song is published in the songbook "Tenemos Esperanza." See Jorge A. Lockward (editor), *Tenemos Esperanza – Temos Esperança – We Have Hope* (New York: United Methodist Church, BGBMusik, 2002).

4. Now as we're called by Christ Jesus, let's go there --
to places where people need us, everywhere.

The first stanza reflects the idea of celebrating the Eucharist with the whole community—"The Eucharist as communion of the faithful," as it is stated in Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (BEM from now on).⁴⁰ As it has been the practice in the Methodist context around the world, the open table assumes that everybody, who desires the grace of God, is invited to participate in the feast. Nobody in the community is the owner of the table. The table does not belong to the community. It is God's self-giving to the whole community. Christ's sacramental presence invites all people to celebrate. It is not our table. It is Jesus' Table. This could be stated as one of the theological reasons for the openness of the feast. Putting the issue this way leads us, first, to conceive that children, women, men, without any prejudice, are invited to be part of the feast, celebrating the sacramental gift. BEM states: "It is in the eucharist that the community of God's people is fully manifested. Eucharistic celebrations always have to do with the whole Church, and the whole Church is involved in each local Eucharistic celebration."⁴¹ Wesley, in his sermon "The Means of Grace," argues:

Is not the eating of the bread and the drinking of that cup, the outward and visible means whereby God conveys into our souls all that spiritual grace, that righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost which were purchased by the body of Christ once broken, and the blood of Christ once shed for us? Let all, therefore, who truly desire the grace of God, eat of that bread and drink of that cup.⁴²

Metaphoric languages such as "hand in hand," "in circle," and "new hands for holding on," to mention just a few, are helpful expressions to declare the unity of the body where acceptance, gathering, friendship, caresses, affection, hugging, love, justice, and peace are strong signs of the Christ's presence linking people to one another. The inclusive language is better expressed when it represents the metaphorical way to express the profound desire of being ready and able to lift up our hearts participating and celebrating communion, whatever our physical condition, social-economic status, ethnicity, or cultural background. Thus, when the body and blood of Christ are shared all kinds of intolerance, rejection, racism, separation, social-economic injustice, disabilities, and lack of liberty are radically challenged. Reconciled and united by the celebration of the Eucharist gift, the body of Christ is called to be prophetic agent of reconciliation among human beings and among the created world. The Eucharist represents a good place where the community's inclusive posture can be expressed as a whole. In that sense, the celebration of the Eucharist as sacramental gift is an invitation to live community in its totality (*koinonia*), its unity: the sacrament of the "common-unity."

⁴⁰ *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*. World Council of Churches, 1982, 14.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Sermon 16, "The Means of Grace," in Albert C. Outler (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984), 390.

In the second stanza, the memorial character of the Eucharist (anamnesis) as it is implicit in the statement: "Take and eat, this is my Body, Jesus said," which is followed in Pauline and Lukan biblical texts by the words, "this do in my remembrance" (*anamnesis*). This is a memorial act instituted by Jesus Christ. The elements of the communion are not just bread and wine, but, because of the Word, they become sacrament: God's gift. Martin Luther, quoting Augustine, once said: "The words come to the elements and they become sacraments."⁴³ The elements are Christ's "consubstantial" body and blood because of the Word. Because Jesus came into the world (*epiphany*), as the incarnated Gift from God, he offered himself as a visible gift to everyone who celebrates his memorial sacrifice. This is a visible sign, and an anticipation of the fellowship we will celebrate in the coming time (*eschatology*), where there will be place for many not just for some. The meal with which Christ is remembered announces and establishes the presence of the "Kin-dom" as much as it was shared with all during Christ's ministry in our midst. The memorial (*anamnesis*) of his life, death, and resurrection (paschal mystery) must be spread beyond the limits of the local community. Not only do visible signs express the memorial character of the sacrament, but Jesus' words, which make it sacrament also do so. The proclamation of the Word (God's gift) is an essential element in the memorial celebration of the Eucharist. Word and Table together actualize the reality of the sacrament. The Words claim Christ's presence in the Eucharist meal. In Rubem Alves, a Brazilian theologian, understanding, this is the mystery of the sacrament: the visible sign of an absence, that is, the presence of the absence. He says: "When things awaken longing remembrance and cause the memory of love and the desire for return to grow in the heart, we say that they are *sacraments*. This is a sacrament: visible signs of an absence, symbols which make us think about return."⁴⁴ William Crockett also helps us to understand the sacramental and redemptive meaning we celebrate in the memorial Eucharist. He says: "Through the Eucharistic memorial, the sacrifice of the cross is made sacramentally present in order that we may participate in its redemptive reality in the present."⁴⁵ The prophetic dimension of the Eucharistic practice of the Church dwells in the ability to see and interpret the memorial absence and spread it with courage in order to transform the undesirable reality.

The third stanza leads us to transformation: "new thanksgiving," and "makes us new"—gift for the life of the world. From that perspective it is possible to say that the Eucharist is a *Passover* meal in the sense that it has the potential of transforming old oppressive reality into new redemptive experience of liberation. It is the new paschal meal of the Church in which Christ is celebrated as the anticipation of the Supper of the Lamb—the meal of the new covenant. It is a transposition from an old state without God's presence to a new state with God's mercy: God's self-giving. As it was quoted before, Crockett says: "When the meal is celebrated in thanksgiving for the gifts of creation, the community that celebrates it cannot fail to seek justice for all God's creation."⁴⁶ The prophetic community is called to

⁴³ Luther's Works. Vol. 51 – *Sermons I* (Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 189-93.

⁴⁴ Rubem Alves, *I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 262.

act with commitment against so many other factors that compromise the dignity of human beings and the stability of the created order. It is around the Table that the Word has the most fundamental expression of transformation. The Word will be mediated by the extraordinary vigor of the visible symbols that interact by faith (invisible presence) renewing the community to an authentic prophetic Christian practice in the world. This is a liturgical meal that employs symbolic word and actions (visible signs) by which the Church expresses its hope for changing. The prophetic community is a transforming community—transforming, and always being transformed as a visible sign of symbolic exchange.

The fourth stanza reminds us that Jesus' words call for the fulfillment of the mission. This is another function of the prophetic Eucharistic celebration: it must send all of us toward the fulfillment of a mission in the world. The Eucharist will be a symbol of transformation when the Word is heard around a round table, in which, as was said by Fred Kaan in his hymn called "Round-Table Church," there are "... no sides or corners, no first or last, no honours." Word and Table, connected with each other, celebrated in a round-table, have the strength of transformation. Letty Russell, in her book *Church in the Round*, from a feminist perspective, also corroborates to the connectedness character of the table. She says: "The round table in itself emphasizes connection, for when we gather around we are connected, in an association or relationship with one another;" and from a feminist perspective she continues: "[Feminist ecclesiology] asks critical questions about the relationship of the experience of those struggling for the full humanity of all women together with men, to the experience of those struggling for liberation and new life in biblical and church tradition. And it asks how to make connections across dividing lines of religion, culture, race, class, gender, and sexual orientation so that church and world become connected as circle of friends."⁴⁷ Without that understanding, Word alone and Table by itself fail in the totality of their meaning. When the proclamation of the Word becomes united with the gifts of the bread and the cup, the celebration becomes the sacramental sign of transformation. In that sense, the community will be prepared to hear Jesus' calling for mission, inviting and challenging it to serve the created world and all human beings as committed agents in proclamation of God's Kingdom: sacramental gift. In other words, as was said by Crockett, to celebrate Eucharist we must translate our worship into discipleship, that is, into mission. He continues: "To celebrate the memorial of the Lord's death until he comes means to accept living under the sign of the cross in this world, identifying with the victims of a fallen creation, and seeking to bring about a transformation of those conditions in society that victimize others."⁴⁸ The Eucharist must always include both Word and sacrament (proclamation and celebration), which result in prophetic action. The Word was proclaimed and the sacrament was celebrated. Now, it is time for prophetic mission. As I say in the last stanza of the Eucharistic song: "Let's go there—to places where people need us, everywhere."

⁴⁷ Letty M. Russell, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1993), 18-19.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

The refrain itself reflects, strongly and radically, the main idea present in all stanzas: the whole community must celebrate the Jesus Table joyfully and inclusively. It must be an open sacramental celebration. If Holy Communion is understood as a gift from God to God's people, there is no reason to break the circle, to negate God's sign of grace which sustains the community of the faithful. The sacrament of the Table is, in its essence, a communal celebration. Nobody celebrates alone. Around the Table there is no place for loneliness. As a prophetic community, our commitment is to share faithfully and joyfully the gifts of God with all human beings together. One does not know who will come to the Table when everybody is invited to come. But Jesus was sent to all; God's gifts are given to all. As Crockett, quoting Raimundo Panikkar, said "It is risky to celebrate the Eucharist." It is risky when the Word is not understood, when the symbols have no meaning, when the community is not united and linked one to another, and when the Eucharist does not challenge the community to testify God's Kingdom to the whole creation. Panikkar's quotation states: "The great challenge today is to convert the sacred bread into real bread, the liturgical peace into political peace, the worship of the Creator into reverence for the Creation, the Christian praying community into an authentic human fellowship. It is risky to celebrate the Eucharist. We may have to leave it unfinished, having gone first to give back to the poor what belongs to them."⁴⁹ Yes, it is a risk to be a prophetic Christian community. He continues: "To celebrate the memorial of the Lord's death until he comes means to accept living under the sign of the cross in this world, identifying with the victims of a fallen creation, and seeking to bring about a transformation of those conditions in society that victimize others."⁵⁰ The Eucharist must always include both Word and Sacrament (proclamation and celebration), which result in prophetic action. The Word was proclaimed and the sacrament was celebrated. Let's go there to places where people need us—everywhere, so that the sacramental gift may be means of grace, means of transformation and life for the world.

The Brazilian Methodist Eucharist Practice

Simeia Monteiro presents a general reference about the liturgical practice in the Methodist Church at present time. She says:

Today the Methodist Church in Brazil does not have a uniform practice in worship. At present there exists a book of rites, which tries to orient churches in the basic aspects of Methodist worship. Like the old manuals, it contains general directions for the pastors and leaders of the churches, chiefly in regard to specific and special services and occasions. In reality, the Methodist Church of Brazil enjoys no national coordination in the area of liturgy. The work falls to the college of bishops who call together when necessary a national working group to prepare some

⁴⁹ Ibid., 263.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

specific material or to revise what already exists. In general the church does not provide much guidance or direction. The basic pattern of worship or order of service follows the plan of Isaiah 6:1-8, augmented by a moment of praise after the confession of sin. This order is as follows: adoration, confession, praise, edification, and dedication. The manual contains no explanation of the theology of this order. It can hardly be said that this constitutes an official order of liturgy of the Methodist Church of Brazil, or that it has to be used every Sunday except for when baptism or the Lord's Supper is celebrated.⁵¹

This is the crude reality of the liturgical celebration in the Methodist local church. The most evident situation is the fact that the Eucharist is not a central part of the worship. From this follows the empty sense of the sacramental practice. Consequently, the sacrament bears the deflation of its theological, symbolical and practical meaning. Its practice no more expresses and announces the historical inheritance of the Christian common tradition. The damages are evident: the lack of acknowledgement of Eucharist's centrality; absence of the memorial and polysemic character of the sacramental symbol; incomprehension of the theological concepts expressed in the Supper elements; and the absence of the communal and memorial character of the Eucharist. Thus, the symbolic meaning, the theology, the place, and the communal celebration must be constituted as elements of deep debate in the Protestant churches, which intend to valorize the imperishable inheritance of the Christian faith through liturgy: paschal mystery.

The present essay is a claim for reflection recognizing the beauty of our Christian sacramental heritage. The Brazilian Methodist Church must be open to read, study, and reflect on issues surrounding the sacramental life of the church for the sake of its identity. Using this principle, the next part will present some challenges for the Brazilian Methodists.

As mentioned before, one of the main purposes of this essay is to awaken the Brazilian Methodist people to understand and to live the magnitude of the sacramental life, specially the sacrament of Eucharist. After observing our Wesleyan and historical heritage some challenges must be raised and further steps must be suggested.

It is common sense that the most vital element in community life is the celebration of faith shared in living liturgical performance. An inevitable question, then, emerges: How can the community learn and live sacramental spirituality if there is no sufficient reference to be observed, analyzed, and practiced in pedagogical sense? In other words, the Brazilian Methodist Church needs to be acquainted with the fact that its literature does not explore or support the Church in assimilating the deep and strong meaning of its sacramental life. If the congregation does not have strong sacramental understanding, it needs to review its process of learning, its Christian education program, and its liturgical practice.

⁵¹ Simeí Monteiro. *Op. Cit.*, p. 270.

Here are some brief points for further steps:

1. To explore Biblical studies on sacrament; early Church documents; Protestant Reform discussions and controversies on the issue; Wesley's sacramental theology; and contemporary researches.
2. To assimilate all symbolical and deep meaning of the Eucharist.
3. To recognize that Eucharist is more than a simple private event.
4. To understand the Eucharist as a means of grace and celebrate it as frequent as possible.
5. To celebrate Eucharist's spirituality intensely.
6. To review the established process of Christian education using the sacramental understanding as an essential paradigm.
7. To extend the meaning of the Eucharist as a sign of commitment and covenant with the whole creation.
8. To share inclusively the beauty of God's grace present in engaged sacramental spirituality.
9. To experience the whole worship as sacramental.
10. To live Christian ethic through sacramental spirituality.
11. Certainly, these challenges are only a starting point towards the celebration of an engaging sacramental spirituality among Brazilian Methodists.

Final Remarks

It must be reaffirmed that this essay is meant to be a starting point for a wider conversation among the Brazilian Methodist people using the shared values and weaknesses present in this essay, in order to reach the plenitude of our Methodist identity.

Some points presented here must be stressed. First, the theme of the sacramental life of the Church must be explored, studied, and digested by the Brazilian Methodist congregations. It means that the congregation needs to go beyond its Christian education system in search of material that could provide congregational references to grow in theological, social, spiritual, and ecumenical ways. Surely, the deep meaning of the sacrament covers all these related issues and a serious contact with the variety of historical materials from the very early church through the present time are available to achieve this goal.

Second, the assimilation of the symbolical meaning of the Eucharist assures to the whole community the sense of remembrance. It is well conceived that the symbol has this tremendous value to link its subject into countless realities. This fact, by itself, could make a remarkable difference to the community who celebrates the mystery of Jesus Christ: incarnation, passion, death, resurrection, ascension, and second coming. The worship will be the place in which the community celebrates Christian memory—remembrance of journey that sustains its existence.

Third, a review of the Eucharistic understanding could direct the church to an inevitable review of its Christian education system. A living Eucharist points to a continuous formation process. The community of the baptized, transformed by the power of the Spirit through water, formed by the baptismal paradigm, and gathered around the Table could be

a living source that pours life, love, and praise—where people are gathered, nurtured, and sent to fulfill God’s will into the created order.

Fourth, Eucharist does not happen just occasionally as an isolated event. The whole congregation must remember and celebrate it constantly and intensively whenever it is being performed, in connection to its unlimited liturgical life. In addition, it integrates the whole community to share its commitment and covenant in love to one another, to the neighbor, the poor, the rich, the children, the women, the men, and to the whole creation.

Finally, from the perspective of a committed pastoral action in the world, what is at stake is the challenge of celebrating the Eucharist committed to a liturgical spirituality—prophetic and visionary action—directed to well being for everyone in the world created for all not just for some. A Christian Eucharistic liturgy with a prophetic vocation, inserted into the pluralistic, global, nuclear, individualistic, competitive, unjust, and selfish context of this era in which we live, should be enacted in a way that goes beyond the limits of the common Christian stereotype. From Jesus’ Table we should eagerly rescue the capacity to read the reality, to evaluate its effects, and to act consciously. This is a capacity rooted in prophetic criticism and in a visionary imagination that has the strength to transform the undesired order. The pleasure of worshipping together and the enjoyment of serving the neighbor are admirable points of departure and the Eucharist is the reference and foundation. This is our vocation, a vocation toward the unity—perhaps towards a “reconciliation” of sorts where we are invited to acknowledge and feel the world’s greatest sorrows and most painful realities, while also hoping to persevere in the transformation of such way of being in the world. Let us, together, go to Jesus’ Table where we can hold in tension the paradigm of our suffering realities and our longing for change.

Apendix

CELEBRAÇÃO DA CEIA DO SENHOR

LITURGIA DE ENTRADA

***SAUDAÇÃO**

LEITURA BÍBLICA: *Salmo 85.10-13

D: Encontraram-se a graça e a verdade, a justiça e a paz se beijaram. Da terra brota a verdade, dos céus a justiça baixa o seu olhar. Também o SENHOR dará o que é bom, e a nossa terra produzirá o seu fruto. A justiça irá adiante dele, cujas pegadas ela transforma em caminhos.

***ORAÇÃO**

D: Ó SENHOR, nosso Deus,
o universo fala do teu poder
e da sabedoria das tuas mãos.
Rogamos que, ao participarmos desta mesa
sejamos abençoados e transformados
pelo sacrifício vivo da tua presença.
Que o poder, a honra e a glória
sejam dadas a ti pelos séculos dos séculos. Amém

♪ CÂNTICO DE ACOLHIDA

LITURGIA DA PALAVRA

*LEITURA BÍBLICA

♪ CÂNTICO DE ACLAMAÇÃO

*HOMILIA

LITURGIA EUCARÍSTICA

♪ CÂNTICO EUCARÍSTICO

GRANDE AÇÃO DE GRAÇA

D: Amados irmãos e irmãs, o SENHOR Deus Onipotente, nosso Pai Celestial, entregou Jesus Cristo, seu unigênito Filho à morte de cruz para nossa redenção. E o SENHOR, pela oferta de si mesmo, feita uma só vez, fez um sacrifício pleno, perfeito e suficiente pelos pecados de toda a humanidade; e instituiu perpétua recordação de sua morte, ordenando-nos, em seu Evangelho, que a continuemos até a segunda vinda. É o SENHOR Jesus quem nos convida para a mesa da santa comunhão. Portanto, agradecidos e agradecidas, consagremo-nos a Deus em resposta ao seu amor.

D: O SENHOR esteja contigo.

C: E contigo também.

D: Elevem os corações.

C: Ao SENHOR os elevamos.

D: Demos graças ao SENHOR, nosso Deus.

C: Assim fazê-lo é digno e justo.

- D:** É verdadeiramente digno, justo e de nosso estrito dever, que em todos os tempos e lugares te rendamos graças, ó SENHOR, santo, onipotente e eterno Deus. Portanto, louvamos e engrandecemos o teu glorioso nome, exaltando-te sempre e dizendo:
- C:** **Santo, Santo, Santo, SENHOR Deus onipotente.**
Os céus e a terra estão cheios da tua glória.
Hosana nas alturas.
Bendito o que vem em nome do SENHOR.
Hosana nas alturas.
- D:** Tu és Santo, ó DEUS Onipotente, e bendito para sempre o teu Filho, nosso SENHOR Jesus Cristo. Teu Espírito o ungiu com poder para proclamar as boas novas a toda a humanidade. Cristo prometeu estar conosco sempre. Portanto, reverentemente nós te suplicamos, ó Deus misericordioso, que nos ouças com teu Filho Jesus Cristo, pelo poder do Espírito Santo e, por tua infinita bondade, consagres os dons de pão e vinho para que recebendo-os segundo a instituição de teu Filho, nós sejamos participantes do teu abençoado corpo e sangue, para todo o sempre.
- C:** **Ó Deus misericordioso, nós humildemente te imploramos que nos santifiques com o teu Espírito e nos abençoes. Concede-nos a graça de alcançar a unidade da fé e crescer em todas as coisas naquele que vive e reina, Cristo, nosso SENHOR, a quem pertencem a honra, a glória e o domínio pelos séculos dos séculos.**
- D:** “Porque eu recebi do SENHOR o que também vos entreguei: que o SENHOR Jesus, na noite em que foi traído, tomou o pão; e tendo dado graças, o partiu e disse: Isto é o meu corpo, que é dado por vós; fazei isto em memória de mim. Por semelhante modo, depois de haver ceado, tomou também o cálice, dizendo: Este cálice é a nova aliança no meu sangue; fazei isto, todas as vezes que o beberdes, em memória de mim” (1Co 11.23-25).
- D:** Portanto, recordando os méritos de teu Filho Jesus Cristo, te rogamos que aceites este nosso sacrifício de louvor e ação de graças, como sacrifício vivo e santo pela oferta de Jesus Cristo pelos pecados de toda a humanidade, a fim de que proclamemos o mistério da fé:
- C:** **Ó SENHOR, anunciamos a tua vitória sobre a morte,**
proclamamos a tua ressurreição,
esperamos tua gloriosa vinda.
Maranatha! Maranatha! Maranatha!
Vem, SENHOR Jesus!

D: Derrama o teu Espírito Santo sobre o teu povo aqui reunido, e sobre estes dons de Pão e Vinho. A fim de que o pão que vamos comer seja a comunhão no corpo de Cristo e o vinho que vamos beber seja a comunhão no sangue de Cristo.

C: Amém.

***ORAÇÃO DO PAI NOSSO**

***SAUDAÇÃO DA PAZ**

***DISTRIBUIÇÃO DOS ELEMENTOS**

D: Porque há um só pão, assim nós, sendo muitos, somos um corpo em Cristo e todos membros uns dos outros, pois todos participamos do mesmo pão.

O pão que partimos é a comunhão no corpo de Cristo.

O cálice, pelo qual damos graças, é a comunhão no sangue de Cristo.

***ORAÇÃO DE GRATIDÃO**

D: Senhor, alimentados por estes dons de pão e vinho, agradecemos-te pela esperança que nos renova e nos desafia no compromisso de servir no teu reino. Que a paz e a justiça se façam presentes em nossa caminhada e que possamos ser fiéis testemunhas do teu amor hoje e sempre. Amém!

LITURGIA DE ENVIO

♪ CÂNTICO FINAL

[Hino de envio]

***BÊNÇÃO APOSTÓLICA**

Texto litúrgico copilado e adaptado por Rev. Dr. Tércio B. Junker

Sumário

O presente texto pretende refletir sobre a compreensão sacramental Metodista brasileira e sua prática à luz da teologia sacramental Wesleyana. Destina-se a convidar o povo brasileiro metodista, em particular, e outros contextos missionários no exterior, em geral, a fim de compreender e viver a grandeza da vida sacramental da Igreja, especialmente através da celebração eucarística. Destina-se, ainda, a enfatizar o significado e a relevância do desenvolvimento de uma vida litúrgico-cristã engajada no mundo em um sentido profético. Aqui estão algumas perguntas que permeiam o núcleo deste ensaio: Em que sentido a riqueza dos postulados teológicos wesleyanos, a respeito dos sacramentos, convidam e estimulam a comunidade wesleyana brasileira a refletir e re-imaginar as suas próprias práticas sacramentais? Por que a prática litúrgica-sacramental atual do metodismo brasileiro apresenta certo distanciamento dos postulados teológicos sacramentais wesleyanos? Como as comunidades metodistas do Brasil poderiam tornar-se mais conscientes do seu legado e de sua identidade metodista? Como a formação espiritual da comunidade metodista brasileira poderia sabiamente direcionar seu conteúdo para o profundo significado teológico dos sacramentos?

Abordar questões como essas não é tarefa simples com respostas absolutas e possibilidades predeterminadas. No entanto, o caráter complexo de tal esforço não deve desencorajar-nos de tentar vislumbrar novas alternativas para a “sensibilidade sacramental” da igreja. Nas seções deste ensaio, eu ofereço minha própria perspectiva sobre o assunto, olhando mais de perto o contexto da Igreja Metodista no Brasil, observando como seus contextos históricos e contemporâneos recentes favorecem a construção e afirmação de sua identidade litúrgica. A fim de atingir tal objetivo, eu pretendo envolver a nossa conversa em quatro seções com as seguintes perspectivas em mente. Em primeiro lugar, é indispensável recorrer às nossas raízes wesleyanas e responder perguntas, como por exemplo: o que é fundamental na teologia sacramental wesleyana, como retratado em documentos históricos wesleyanos, que favorece o aprofundamento e a compreensão deste assunto tão vital à nossa prática cristã? Em segundo lugar, faz-se necessário descrever as razões históricas que possivelmente geraram a atual postura metodista brasileira quanto à sua compreensão e prática sacramental. Em terceiro lugar, a fim de contribuir na reflexão teológica, ofereço uma abordagem teológica pessoal em que me dirijo à noção de espiritualidade sacramental explorando o significado do conceito de símbolo e apresentando uma análise teológica de uma canção que eu escrevi para a celebração eucarística. Finalmente, considerando a riqueza da estrutura litúrgica da Eucaristia, vivida pela maioria das igrejas metodistas do mundo atual, eu ofereço um apêndice com uma liturgia eucarística completa, em Português, que eu compilei e adaptei, como um exemplo metodista para as comunidades de língua portuguesa. É minha intenção que este ensaio possa encontrar ressonância para um público mais amplo do que apenas a comunidade metodista brasileira ou de língua portuguesa. Há vários aspectos do empreendimento missionário histórico e da identidade metodista sacramental que podem encontrar relevância para comunidades metodistas ao redor do mundo que anelam por autêntica identidade e prática sacramental.

APUNTES (0279-9790)

Published by the Mexican American Program

Perkins School of Theology --SMU

P.O. Box 750133

Dallas, TX 75275-0133

Address Service Requested

**Periodical Postage Paid
at Dallas, Texas**

and at Additional Mailing Office

APUN002

APU14002

*****ALL FOR ADC 945

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION

LIBRARY - SERIALS DEPT

2400 RIDGE RD

BERKELEY CA 94709-1212

995 S17 P19

